United Nations A/AC.183/SR.323

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 June 2010

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 323rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 April 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that, in the statement issued after its 19 March 2010 meeting, the Quartet had recalled that the international community had not recognized Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, had condemned the recent Israeli announcement of 1,600 new settlement units in East Jerusalem and had called for a complete settlement freeze. The Quartet also had indicated that proximity talks were an important step towards direct negotiations and had expressed the belief that the negotiations should lead to a mutual agreement on a two-State solution within 24 months.

3. Also on 19 March, the Bureau of the Committee had issued a statement expressing grave concern at Israel's ongoing policy of perpetuating its occupation of East Jerusalem through settlement expansion and other policies and actions illegal under international law.

4. The Secretary-General had visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 20 and 21 March 2010 and had held meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials. On 24 March 2010, he had briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

5. On 23 March 2010, the United States President had met with the Israeli Prime Minister at the White House.

6. On 24 and 25 March 2010, the Committee had convened the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People at the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Seminar had been followed by a one-day Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People.

7. On 24 March 2010, the Human Rights Council had adopted three resolutions pertaining to settlements, the right to self-determination and grave Israeli human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 25 March 2010, it had adopted a resolution on follow-up to the Goldstone report, in which it had requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to appoint a committee of independent experts to monitor the investigations undertaken by Israel and the Palestinian side.

8. On 28 March 2010, the twenty-second Arab League Summit, held in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, had concluded with the adoption of a declaration which mandated the establishment of a legal committee to follow up on the Judaization of East Jerusalem, evictions and attacks against holy sites, with the aim of putting its findings before national and international courts. Arab leaders had agreed to hold an international conference on Jerusalem in 2010 sponsored by the Arab League, with the participation of Arab organizations, unions and civil society institutions. The Secretary-General had addressed the meeting, encouraging the member States of the League to continue pursuing the Arab Peace Initiative.

9. On 13 April 2010, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians had convened in Madrid, chaired by the Foreign Minister of Norway and attended by the Foreign Minister of Spain, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority and a representative of the Quartet.

10. On 14 April 2010, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs had briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), in his capacity as Vice-Chair, had made a statement on behalf of the Committee.

11. On 8 April 2010, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, following a decision by the Bureau, had launched a page on Facebook, a social networking site on the Internet, as an outreach activity and to fulfil its information mandate. The Division had expressed the hope that the initiative would better educate those outside the United Nations about the work of the Department of Political Affairs. It would provide alerts for users about the various activities of the Committee and the Division, including information about international meetings and conferences, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the documents collection of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as well as updates on what civil society partners were doing on the ground.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory gave no indication of anything other than continued violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, particularly through the continuation of settlement activities, especially in and around East Jerusalem, involving the displacement of residents, evictions from homes, the building of settlements, including 1,600 units announced during the visit of the Vice President of the United States of America, and excavation at holy sites. With regard to East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupying authorities, in collaboration with extreme settlers, were running the risk of pushing the conflict into a religious dimension and an unknown direction.

13. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade was continuing and the humanitarian situation was abhorrent. The blockade had been in place for more than 1,000 days and exaggerated reports of the loosening of the blockade, circulated by the Israelis, were inaccurate. The Director of Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had described it as "a drop in the bucket".

14. The Palestinian people continued to face checkpoints, harassment, closed areas and imprisonment, with 11,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons. There had been an escalation of tension after two military orders had come into force which, open to broad interpretation, could result in the deportation, under a range of pretexts, of from 60,000 to 70,000 Palestinians from the West Bank. In that connection, letters had been sent explaining the details of those Israeli regulations and asking the international community to stop Israel from acting on the orders and to get them rescinded.

15. At the Security Council meeting held the previous week there had been an extensive debate during which many speakers had deplored the orders issued by Israel and had called on Israel to rescind them. The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement had also issued a statement on the issue and the Islamic Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in New York had done the same. He believed that it would be appropriate for the Committee to issue a communiqué condemning the Israeli regulations and demanding that they should be rescinded and not implemented.

16. The Arab Group was continuing its efforts with the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Members of the Security Council and its President and was continuing to watch Israel's implementation of the regulations very closely. In that connection, every time in the past that Israel had illegally deported Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resolutions had been adopted in the Security Council, at least six in the past, and all the deportees had been successfully returned. It was a duty to unleash the collective power of the Security Council and the entire United Nations system, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, to prevent Israel from opening a new chapter of violations of international law, particularly international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

17. On the political front, after extensive consultation with and advice from their friends, the Arab side and the Palestinians had held a meeting in Cairo, attended by the President of the Palestinian Authority, at which the United States initiative of proximity talks had been assessed. Although the Arab side, including the Palestinians, had not been convinced that the current Israeli Government was seriously interested in peace and negotiation, it had approved the idea of participation by the Palestinian side in proximity talks. However, shortly thereafter, Israel had announced its decision to construct new housing units. That obstructionist policy had created a crisis before proximity talks could be held. Israel had yet to respond to United States requests for clarification regarding its position and as a result, United States Special Envoy George Mitchell had not set a date for his visit to the region to usher in proximity talks.

18. The Palestinian, and indeed the global, position was that Israel must cease all settlement activity, including natural growth and in East Jerusalem. No form of negotiation was possible as long as Israel continued to create obstacles on the ground that prejudged the final status negotiations.

19. The peace process was at an impasse, despite the flexible and responsible Arab position and that of the Council of the European Union, adopted on 8 December 2009, and the position adopted by the Quartet in Moscow on 19 March 2010. The rightist Israeli Government and extreme rightists in the country

were being inflexible, not allowing the proximity talks to move forward.

20. The Arab group and Palestine, separately, had sent letters to the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council and the President of the General Assembly concerning the desecration of the Ma'man Allah (Mamilla) cemetery in Jerusalem. Israel's Museum of Tolerance was a contradiction in terms, since a lack of respect for the burial ground on which it was being built was the opposite of tolerance.

United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, Istanbul, Turkey, from 25 to 27 May 2010

21. **The Chair**, drawing attention to working paper No. 5 containing the provisional programmes for the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, said that the purpose of the Meeting was to provide for an exchange of views on the current state of the peace process and to promote a constructive dialogue among stakeholders on how to advance the Palestinian State-building agenda. At the meeting, discussions would be held on prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian peace and ways to reset the political dialogue, including through third-party mediation and other peace initiatives; the Palestinian Authority's programme for ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian State; modalities to move forward the Palestinian State-building agenda and to create the socio-economic underpinnings for statehood; and ways to create a political climate conducive to advancing the peace process and building an international consensus for establishing a Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

22. The international meeting would be followed by a one-day United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, which would focus on the situation in Jerusalem and the role of non-State actors.

23. *The provisional programmes for the International Meeting and the Public Forum contained in working paper No. 5 were adopted.*

24. **The Chair** informed the Committee that its delegation to the International Meeting and the Public Forum would be composed of the members of the Bureau, the Permanent Representatives of Turkey and Nicaragua to the United Nations and the Permanent Observer for Palestine.

Report on the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People and Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, Vienna, from 24 to 26 March 2010

25. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) (Rapporteur) said that the theme of the Seminar had been "Building institutions and moving forward with establishing the State of Palestine". The delegation had welcomed the opening statement of Austria's Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs and had appreciated the opportunity for an exchange of views with the Political Director of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

26. The Seminar had been attended by representatives of 54 Governments, Palestine, 4 intergovernmental organizations, 6 United Nations system entities and 20 civil society organizations. Presentations had been made by 16 experts.

27. The Committee had been represented by a delegation composed of the Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee, the Permanent Representative of Cyprus and the Permanent Observer for Palestine. The Secretary-General had been represented by Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

28. In his keynote address, the Minister of Planning and Administrative Development of the Palestinian Authority had outlined its programme entitled "Palestine: ending the occupation, establishing the State" (the Fayyad Plan), which called for Palestinians unilaterally to build the administrative, economic and institutional foundation of an independent State in spite of the Israeli occupation. Many speakers had expressed support for the forward-looking programme.

29. Speakers at the first plenary meeting had provided an update on the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They had warned that the economic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would not abate with financial aid alone and had emphasized the need to work consistently to end the occupation and achieve

a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They had discussed occupation-related practices that caused high unemployment rates and a lack of equitable access to education.

30. It had been pointed out that the main elements of the reconstruction plan for Gaza discussed at the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Cairo in 2009 had never had a chance because of the continued Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. Nonetheless, the reconstruction of Gaza must be part of the overall Palestinian State-building project. The Palestinian economy must move away from an income economy sustained by donor funds and remittances to a productive one, and Palestinians should forgo integration with the Israeli economy in favour of integration with regional and world markets.

31. Speakers at the second plenary meeting had discussed ways to advance the state-building agenda and had reviewed lessons learned from the Paris Protocols, including possible pitfalls to be avoided in implementing the Fayyad Plan. It had been pointed out that the Palestinian Authority had made considerable progress in implementing the state-building agenda in spite of the many obstacles. However, governance programming must be approached from a strategic, long-term, and conflict-sensitive perspective. The goal was to create representative and transparent public institutions, and promote wide civil society engagement, keeping in mind the need for broad consensus-building within Palestinian society.

32. It had been pointed out that the Palestinian Authority no longer had unified power over the Palestinian Territory. Internal political differences and the geographical split had resulted in social fragmentation and growing polarization within the society. One expert, who had analysed the Fayyad Plan from the perspective of Palestinian women, had recommended the adoption of a strategy to mainstream gender issues and concerns and an affirmative action policy to increase the economic participation of women and to provide social protection.

33. At the third plenary meeting, speakers from various entities of the United Nations system and from the donor community had discussed the important role international assistance played in supporting the Palestinian economy and had reviewed the role of the United Nations system, in particular the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities, in mobilizing and coordinating international assistance to the Palestinian people. The role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as the provider of vital socio-economic services to a considerable segment of the Palestinian population had been commended. One expert had highlighted the indispensable role played by international civil society organizations and development agencies in alleviating the plight of the Palestinians and providing an economic safety net for the disadvantaged. He had warned that international assistance and state-building programmes must be all-inclusive and that no Palestinian group should be left out or marginalized, either in Gaza or in Area C and East Jerusalem.

34. The suggestion had been made that international donors and partners in the region should coordinate their approaches towards creating a highly skilled, dynamic workforce that would be able to push the Palestinians towards sustainable and balanced development. Unemployment should be tackled by encouraging entrepreneurship. The international and regional private sector could provide mentorship, guidance, capital and a vast networking potential. The public sector could facilitate the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises through tax incentives and targeted reforms of the education system.

35. The Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People had focused on the situation with regard to the separation wall constructed by Israel on occupied Palestinian land. Participants had heard from experts who had communicated their experiences on the ground and from activists who had personally engaged in non-violent resistance.

36. Two documentary films had been projected at the meeting. The first, entitled "Walled Horizons", had vividly illustrated how Palestinians in both rural and urban areas had suffered as a result of the wall. The second, "Refuse to Die in Silence", had portrayed the creative and non-violent struggle against the construction of the wall and had shown reactions to the demonstrations by the Israel Defense Forces.

37. Participants had also discussed their efforts to uphold international law and to promote compliance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. They had mentioned attempts to bring two cases in the United Kingdom for sales of arms to Israel in violation of international law. There had also been a

briefing on the outcome of the first session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, held in Barcelona, Spain, in early March 2010, to show the international community's complicity in perpetuating violations of Palestinian human rights.

38. The Committee's delegation had commended the civil society organizations for their work and had encouraged them to continue with their efforts until a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine had been achieved.

39. *The Committee took note of the report of the Rapporteur.*

40. *Two documentary films, "Walled Horizons" and "Refuse to Die in Silence", were projected.*

41. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the documentaries should be made available to any interested groups or committees.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.